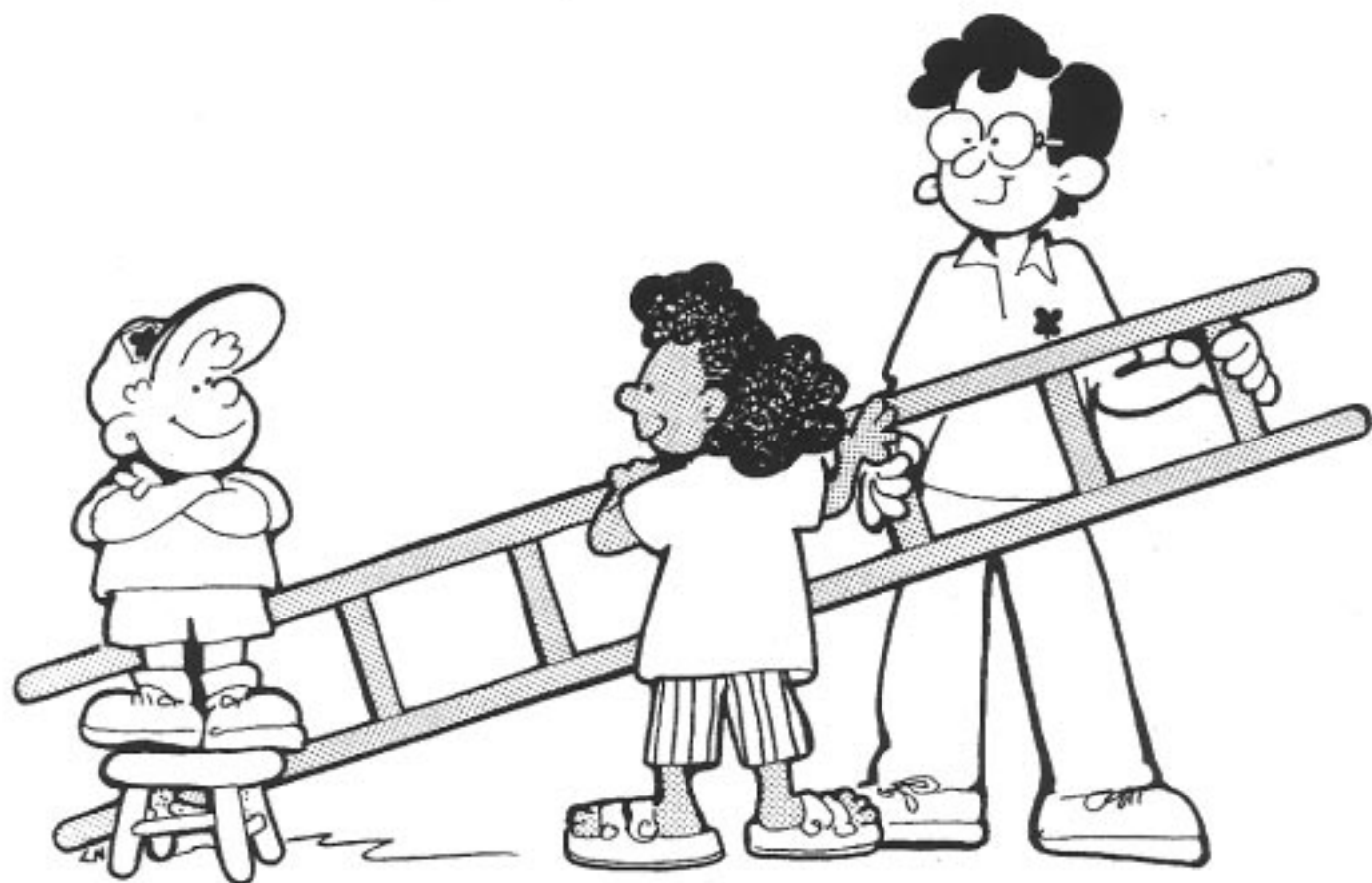


Recognition in Youth Programs:  
Helping Young People Grow



# Helping Volunteers Recognize 4-H'ers

Volunteer Handout





4-H is the youth education program of the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA. National 4-H Council is a not-for-profit educational organization that uses private resources to enhance the development and education of youth.

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For more information, contact your state 4-H office.

Prepared in 1996 by Dr. Jerry Parsons, author and project director, former Iowa program leader, Youth and 4-H; Dr. Melva L. Berkland, editor; Donna J. Fincham, graphic designer; Lonna Nachtigal, illustrator; and Kathy A. Parsons, keyboarder.

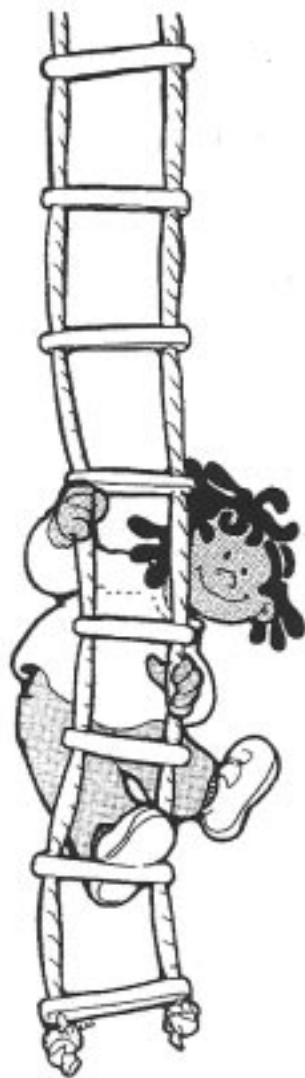
# Helping Volunteers Recognize 4-H'ers



**The National 4-H Recognition Model**



**Recognizing youth for participating can be a first step in building positive self-esteem.**



As a 4-H volunteer, your challenge is to help young people become self-directed, productive, and contributing citizens. Recognition is one of the ways you can achieve this goal. 4-H uses five types of recognition. Each supports, motivates, and encourages young people in a unique way. 4-H'ers are recognized for:

1. participating in educational experiences.
2. making progress toward self-set goals.
3. achieving standards of excellence.
4. excelling in peer competition.
5. demonstrating excellence in cooperation.

To help you use all five types of recognition, you will find a description of each one, ideas on how to use each, and examples of awards that could be given to 4-H'ers to show they have excelled. In addition, you will find some ideas about selecting awards.

### **Recognizing 4-H'ers for Participation in Educational Experiences**

This type of recognition emphasizes the importance of commending young people who have been involved in 4-H educational experiences. For some young people, especially beginners, limited resource, and those with disabilities, taking part in a 4-H learning experience is a significant accomplishment. It is important to note that all youth find this type of recognition meaningful. When you see the pride with which youth wear T-shirts or caps from camp, a workshop, or a livestock show, you realize that this is true.

Recognizing youth for participating can be a first step in building positive self-esteem. It allows us to say to young people: "You are an important person, and you've participated in a 4-H learning experience."

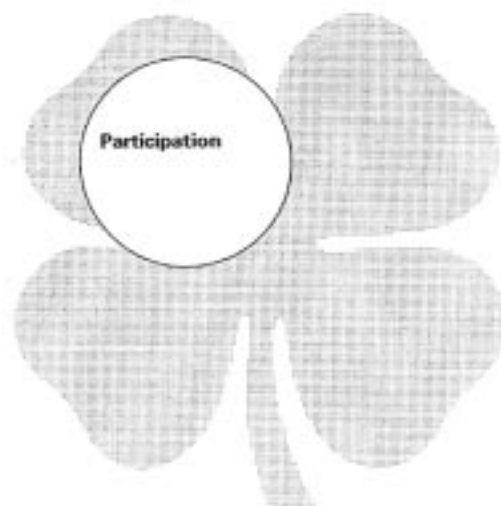
As a 4-H volunteer, you are a key person in deciding when to give this recognition because, most often, you will be presenting this recognition.

### **Suggestions**

1. Set simple criteria for earning this recognition.
2. Publicize the criteria so all young people know what they need to do to be recognized.
3. Recognize all who meet the criteria.
4. Give the recognition as often as it is earned.
5. Present the awards as a part of the learning experience.

### **Examples of Awards**

- Chevrons, stickers, pins
- Certificates
- Membership/participant cards
- News articles
- T-shirts
- Caps



## Recognizing 4-H'ers for Progress toward Self-set Goals

An important part of 4-H is helping young people learn to set goals and then planning ways they can achieve their goals. From time to time, you'll need to help them check their progress toward their goals. The challenge is to help young people set realistic goals and then recognize them for making progress toward their goals, no matter how small or large their accomplishments. Recognition is an important way to help them feel good about their progress toward their goals. Recognition also encourages them to continue to work toward their goals.

A key part of this recognition is the opportunity for a young person or group of young people working cooperatively to review their work with a concerned and caring adult(s). Feedback is essential. Talking face-to-face to give feedback is best, but if it is not possible, give written feedback. Remember that a youth's potential and available resources (time, money, and family support) affect the goals set, progress made, and the growth that the young person demonstrates.

### Suggestions

1. Include goal setting and recognition as a part of all 4-H learning experiences.
2. Use this recognition for all age levels to recognize the unique growth of each individual.
3. Provide help to young people in setting their goals. Project materials are good sources for ideas.
4. Work with young people in small groups or alone because setting goals and checking on progress toward goals are highly personal.

5. Hold check-ups several times during the learning experience but at least at the end of the experience.

6. Make decisions about the progress based upon the 4-H'er's goals and the work they have done.

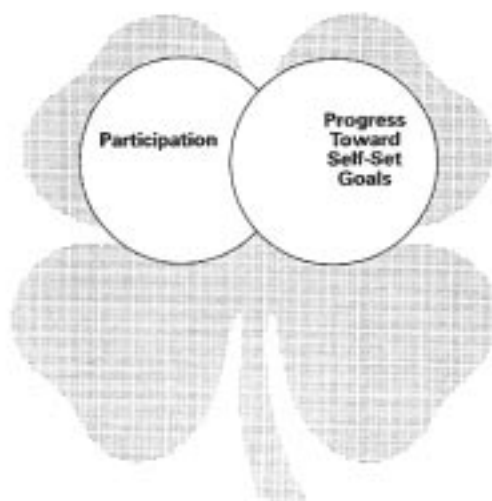
7. Involve the family, if possible, in the goal setting and progress checks.

8. Remember, the goal is the 4-H'er's goal, not your goal or 4-H's goal.

### Examples of Awards

- Positive feedback—private and/or public
- 4-H chevrons, pins
- Useful memorabilia
- Certificates
- Stickers
- Handwritten notes

**Recognition is an important way to help young people feel good about their progress toward their goals.**



**Standards of excellence help 4-H'ers to evaluate the skills they are learning.**

## Recognizing 4-H'ers for Achieving Standards of Excellence

An important goal of 4-H is to teach skills to young people that they can use now, as a youth, and in later life. Standards of excellence help 4-H'ers to evaluate the skills they are learning. Standards of excellence can be useful for products (animals, skirts, zucchinis, etc.) and skills (speaking, demonstrating, decision making, etc.). The standards of excellence often are printed on a judge's scorecard. Ideally, standards are derived from research—primarily from land-grant universities—and they are the same standards used by adults. Subject matter specialists, including 4-H youth specialists, usually help set standards. Young people need the standards as they begin their work.

4-H achievement shows and fairs often are used to provide youth opportunities to have their work compared with standards. The Danish system (of awarding blue-red-white ribbons without ranking within the ribbon groups) is one example of how this can be done. However, when champions are named or exhibits are ranked within groups, then the experience becomes competitive. Recognize all 4-H'ers who meet the standards.



## Suggestions

1. Provide standards of excellence to the young people before they start setting goals for their learning experience.
2. Help 4-H'ers, parents, and evaluators understand the standards that will be used to evaluate products and skills.
3. Provide guidance to help young people develop skills so they can do their best as they work toward standards of excellence.
4. Train evaluators (judges) so they know and accept the standards and are able to provide appropriate feedback to the 4-H'ers.
5. Provide opportunities for the evaluators to discuss with the 4-H'ers how well they have achieved the standards and to provide suggestions for improvement. Note: Standards should not be changed because of problems or situations with which the 4-H'er lives and works.

## Examples of Awards

- Ribbons
- Certificates
- 4-H memorabilia
- Project equipment or supplies





## Recognizing 4-H'ers for Results of Peer Competition

A part of the American tradition is the desire to be the best—to be a champion. This recognition is the result of competitive contests where individuals seek to be the best or do better than the other competitors. Remember, when there is a winner, there are losers—those who were not the best. Granted, in competition, 4-H'ers who do not have the champion exhibit or are not the champion learn and improve their skills, but often the emphasis placed on the winner overshadows what others have done, learned, or achieved.

As a 4-H volunteer, please remember that the desire to win is a strong motivator for some people. Contrary to popular belief, some young people are not motivated by competition with their peers. Often the young people who aren't motivated by competition don't take part in competitive programs or drop out. It is important to be aware of the value a young person places on competition.

### Suggestions

1. Remember, peer competition can be a high-risk activity with stress, conflict, disagreement, and hurt feelings.
2. Make participation in competition optional for all young people.
3. Help 4-H'ers to see the difference between ends and means—what the 4-H'er learned is more important than winning.
4. Remember, most children under 12 are not mature enough for competition.
5. Discuss with 4-H'ers the consequences of taking part in competition (for example, that they might not win and what that may mean to them).

6. Help parents, donors, and others involved understand that the goal of 4-H is to help young people grow and develop and how the competitive experience may help to achieve this goal.

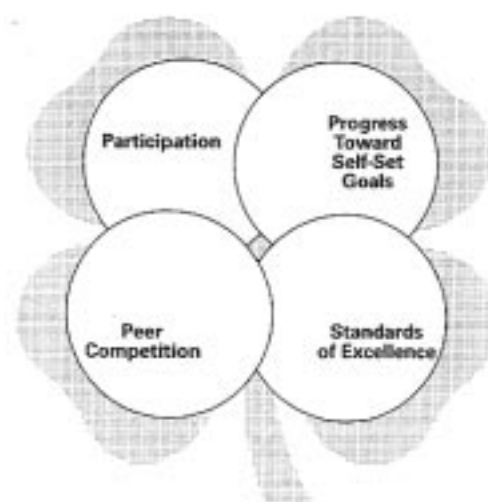
7. Define clearly all competition rules and procedures and use them.

8. Use this type of recognition as an opportunity for publicity. Do not allow publicity to overshadow the educational achievements of the other 4-H'ers.

9. Offer some educational experiences that aren't competitive to meet the needs of young people who aren't motivated by competition.

### Examples of Awards

- Medals
- Trophies
- Plaques
- Scholarships
- Media reports



*The desire to win is a strong motivator for some people. Contrary to popular belief, some young people are not motivated by competition with their peers.*



**When young people work together, they examine their own skills and abilities and explore solutions beyond their own ideas.**

## Recognizing 4-H'ers for Excellence in Cooperation

The main goal of 4-H is to help young people become self-directing, productive, and contributing citizens. We are helping them to learn to work cooperatively in an increasingly interdependent global world. Recognizing young people who work together to learn and achieve goals is a natural part of our recognition model.

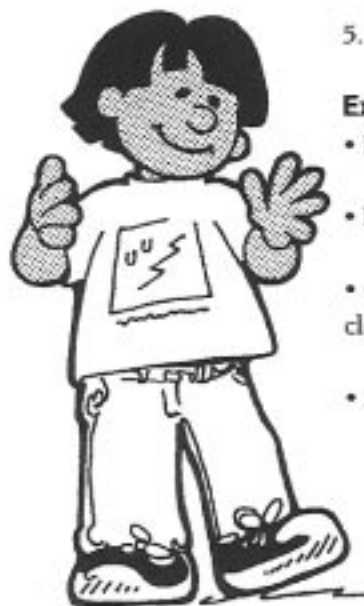
When young people work together, they examine their own skills and abilities and explore solutions beyond their own ideas. At the same time, they affirm their own self-concept. They are learning how to succeed in today's world where business is turning to group efforts to involve all levels of workers in decision making.

### Suggestions

1. Involve all young people in the process.
2. Help them to agree upon goals.
3. Give attention to the way the group works as well as to the end product.
4. Emphasize that the ultimate goal is not extrinsic recognition but to learn to work together.
5. Recognize all members involved.

### Examples of Awards

- Ribbons and certificates
- Newspaper articles
- Community recognition like highway clean-up signs, etc.
- Special trips for the group



## Selection of Awards

When you select awards, here are some ideas to think about.

1. Select awards that are appropriate for the age level and valued by the young people. For example, 9- to 11-year-olds like to collect things, so chevrons, ribbons, etc. are valued. Teens appreciate things they can use.
2. Select awards related to the learning experience; remember, they need not be expensive.
3. Use the 4-H name and emblem, whenever possible. The use of the 4-H group's name or county name is always appropriate. If the extension service name and your land-grant university can be identified, it will add prestige to the award.
4. Select awards that are distinctive and show good design principles.
5. Avoid using the same award repeatedly for the same program or different programs.
6. Remember, news media reports (newspaper, radio, TV, cable TV) enhance any recognition.